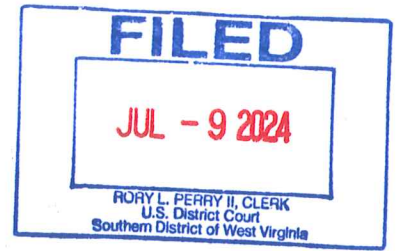


UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA
CHARLESTON GRAND JURY 2024
JULY 9, 2024 SESSION



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

CRIMINAL NO. 3:24-cr-00107
18 U.S.C. § 641

SCOTT CHRISTIE

INDICTMENT

The Grand Jury charges:

Introduction

1. From approximately February 29, 2020, through at least August 22, 2020, and from approximately February 27, 2021, through at least August 14, 2021, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE defrauded the state of West Virginia and the United States of \$34,801.00 in unemployment benefits by submitting materially false unemployment claims.

2. After initially being qualified to receive Unemployment Compensation, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE became ineligible to receive unemployment benefits based on his resumption of employment with his employer on two separate occasions. Nonetheless, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE falsely certified on 52 different weeks that he was unemployed and entitled to Unemployment Compensation via the State of West Virginia's website.

3. Based on defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE'S materially false unemployment certifications, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE received weekly Unemployment Compensation for 52 weeks aggregating to \$34,801.00.

Background

4. Defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE was a resident of Leon, Mason County, West Virginia, in the Southern District of West Virginia.

5. WorkForce West Virginia was a division of the West Virginia Department of Commerce that was funded through the United States Department of Labor. WorkForce West Virginia administered the “Unemployment Compensation” program in the state of West Virginia.

6. Unemployment Compensation (“UC”) was a joint state and federal program that provided monetary benefits to eligible beneficiaries. UC benefits were intended to provide temporary financial assistance to lawful workers who were unemployed through no fault of their own.

7. Those seeking UC benefits in West Virginia submitted online applications to WorkForce West Virginia. Applicants had to answer specific questions to establish eligibility to receive UC benefits, including their name, Social Security Number (SSN), mailing address, and other information. WorkForce West Virginia relied upon the information in the application to determine UC benefits eligibility.

8. If WorkForce West Virginia approved a UC claim, the claimant could choose to receive UC benefits by direct deposit or via debit card.

9. WorkForce West Virginia approved UC benefits using Key Bank, a financial institution as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 20, and headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio.

10. All claimants that chose the debit card option would be mailed, via United States Mail, a KeyBank debit card with the claimant's name on it based upon information received from WorkForce West Virginia.

11. Once the initial application for UC benefits was approved, the claimant was required to certify their continued eligibility for benefits every week. The certification process occurred via the internet. The claimant was required to answer several questions, including, but not limited to: (1) whether the Unemployment Compensation claimant had worked during the certification period; (2) whether the claimant was able to work; (3) whether the claimant was available for work; and (4) whether the claimant was actively looking for work during the certification period.

12. WorkForce West Virginia would authorize continued UC benefits to a claimant based on the claimant's self-certified eligibility. If WorkForce West Virginia authorized the benefits, Key Bank initiated a direct deposit into the claimant's bank account or loaded funds on to the claimant's previously provided debit card, depending on the claimant's election.

13. In March of 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security ("CARES") Act. The CARES Act, among other things, provided additional flexibility and federal funding for state UC agencies, including WorkForce West Virginia.

14. The Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation ("FPUC") program was a temporary unemployment insurance program created by the CARES Act. FPUC originally provided individuals that received approved Unemployment Compensation with an additional \$600 per week in federal funds. In December of 2020, Congress reauthorized FPUC at a lesser amount of \$300 per week and concluded the program in September 2021.

15. From at least February 29, 2020, through August 22, 2020, and from at least February 27, 2021, through August 14, 2021, defendant, SCOTT CHRISTIE, was employed by a company known to the Grand Jury, in Cabell County, West Virginia.

The Scheme

16. Beginning on or about February 10, 2020, through at least August 22, 2020, and beginning on or about February 7, 2021, through at least August 14, 2021, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE knowingly and willfully devised, and intended to devise, a scheme and artifice to defraud WorkForce West Virginia and to obtain money from the United States by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses and representations and promises.

Manner and Means of the Scheme

17. On or about February 10, 2020, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE used the WorkForce West Virginia website to file for UC benefits claiming “lack of work” as his reason for unemployment. In response to his claim, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE was mailed a debit card from Key Bank on or about February 11, 2020, that was loaded with weekly UC benefit funds, subject to defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE’s continued certifications that he was unemployed.

18. Employment and wage records maintained by a company known to the Grand Jury indicate that defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE’s claim was initially valid when made on February 10, 2020, but that he returned to work at a company known to the Grand Jury on or about February 29, 2020, and that he continued to be employed by a company known to the Grand Jury until at least August 22, 2020. Between February 29, 2020, and August 22, 2020, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE submitted twenty-five (25) Benefit Week Ending date certifications (“BWE certifications”) where he did not disclose his employment with a company known to the Grand Jury or earnings paid to him by a company known to the Grand Jury Based on defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE’s materially false representations, WorkForce West Virginia authorized defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE to receive and he did receive UC benefits that he was not entitled to receive.

19. On or about February 7, 2021, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE again used the WorkForce West Virginia website to file for Unemployment Compensation benefits and again claimed “lack of work” as his reason for unemployment. In response to his claim, Defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE was mailed a debit card from Key Bank on or about February 14, 2021, that was loaded with weekly UC benefit funds, subject to defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE’s continued qualification.

20. Employment and wage records maintained by a company known to the Grand Jury indicate that defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE’s claim was again initially valid when made on February 7, 2021, but that he returned to work at a company known to the Grand Jury on or about February 27, 2021, and that he continued to be employed by a company known to the Grand Jury until at least August 14, 2021. Between February 27, 2021, and August 14, 2021, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE submitted twenty-five (25) BWE certifications where he did not disclose his employment with a company known to the Grand Jury or earnings paid to him by a company known to the Grand Jury. Based on defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE’s materially false representations, WorkForce West Virginia authorized defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE to receive and he did receive UC benefits that he was not entitled to receive.

21. In furtherance of the scheme, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE submitted fraudulent weekly certifications to WorkForce West Virginia, falsely stating that he was unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic; that he had not received any wages or income; that he had not returned to work full time; and that he had not worked any hours for the week in question, when in fact, he was employed and earning wages.

22. As a result of these fraudulent statements, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE caused WorkForce West Virginia to authorize approximately fifty-two deposits to defendant SCOTT

CHRISTIE'S debit cards issued by KeyBank, totaling \$34,801.00, on behalf of WorkForce West Virginia and the United States Department of Labor.

Theft of Government Money

23. From approximately February 10, 2020, through at least August 22, 2020, and from approximately February 7, 2021, through at least August 14, 2021, at or near Leon, Mason County, West Virginia, within the Southern District of West Virginia, and elsewhere, defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE, knowingly and willfully stole, purloined, and converted to his own use money in an amount greater than \$1,000.00 from the Department of Labor, a department of the United States, namely approximately \$34,801.00 that was transferred to him in 52 transactions by Key Bank to a debit card provided to him for his use by Key Bank at the direction of WorkForce West Virginia and the United States Department of Labor, with the intent to deprive the United States Department of Labor and WorkForce West Virginia of the use and benefit of that money and defendant SCOTT CHRISTIE did so, knowing that he was not entitled to receive those funds.

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 641.

WILLIAMS S. THOMPSON
United States Attorney

By:


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Assistant United States Attorney